

## IN OUR BACKYARD

JUN 9 1993



AN UPDATE FROM THE ALBERTA SPECIAL WASTE MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

Spring 1993 Vol. 4 No. 2

## Alberta's Great Drug Round Up is a victory for teamwork

It's a very civilized-looking posse.

Pharmacist Olly Kochan is Deputy Registrar of the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association.

Harry Dornn is Communications Officer with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association.

Della Croteau heads the Alberta Poison Centre at the Calgary Foothills Hospital.

Jim Wylie and Gloria Wynnyk are executives with two major drug wholesalers, Medis Western and Northwest Drugs respectively.

And Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation's Jolie Whetzel is a specialist in community programs related to the safe disposal of hazardous wastes.

An unlikely looking bunch, you might think, to track down and round up some of the most dangerous potential killers on the loose in Alberta – but you'd be wrong. Because this committee of individual specialists heads a program which, last year, hauled in a staggering 29 tonnes of old, unused or outdated drugs.

### PRESCRIPTION FOR TRAGEDY

Let's run that by you again. 29 tonnes is over 60,000 pounds of old medications – bottles of salves, boxes of pills, containers of antibiotics – which, had they been left out there in the medicine cabinets and bedside tables of Alberta, could have brought tragedy to hundreds of families.

If you doubt that, talk to Della Croteau at the Alberta Poison Centre. Of the 2,500 calls her organization answers every month, at least 500 are related to accidental poisoning. About 48 per cent of these result from drugs and most are from panic-stricken parents.

"This year," says Ms. Croteau, "we can expect to see more than 6,000 Alberta children under the age of five being accidentally poisoned. It's an intolerable statistic. And we're doing everything we can to reduce the figure or eliminate it altogether."

Olly Kochan, of the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association, concurs. "The number of

medication-related poisonings occurring in the province is frightening. Even though we've made huge strides since the program began, we must continually emphasize the need to remove these potentially dangerous products from the home and ensure they're disposed of properly."

### PHARMACIST POWER

Considering that their efforts are entirely voluntary, the accomplishment of Alberta's pharmacists is astonishing. They initiated the Great Drug Round Up in 1981 with the help of the Calgary Active 20/30 club. And in 1983, they took the idea province-wide.

*(continued next page)*



*A small sampling of the over 29 tonnes of outdated medications turned into the Alberta Great Drug Round Up in 1992.*

*Produced quarterly by the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, "In Our Backyard" is intended to keep Albertans updated on issues and solutions in hazardous waste management. You can contribute to the process by "recycling" this newsletter. Pass it on to a friend with your comments. And should you have suggestions you wish to share, pass them on to us. Our address, phone and fax number are on Page 4.*



Alberta  
Special Waste  
Management  
Corporation  
AN ALBERTA CROWN CORPORATION

By 1983, records show a total of just 738 returns from the entire province. Over the past decade, however, by enlisting the help of various contributing sponsors, they have built it into a major annual event, which now hauls away potential poisons by the truckload.

Close to 700 pharmacies across the province serve as collection sites for so-called "dead drugs" and all Association members participate in the drug disposal and education program. They are joined in the effort by two major drug wholesalers who, again, give their support on an entirely voluntary basis.

Northwest Drugs, represented by Pharmacist Gloria Wynnyk, Marketing Coordinator, and Medis Western, represented by Director of Sales Jim Wylie, each provide money and manpower to help keep the Round Up moving. They also lend some unbridled enthusiasm.

"It's been a fantastic program," says Jim Wylie, "probably one of the best organized in North America in terms of

results. It's protecting the environment. It's encouraging awareness. And it's got to the point where people are returning disposables to the pharmacists on a regular basis."

The two drug companies devote about six weeks a year to the Great Drug Round Up. They pack the disposables in special barrels, store them in their warehouses, and arrange collection by the Alberta Special Waste Management System.

### VETS INVOLVED

The newest member of the Great Drug Round Up posse is the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and results from their first year of participation already have tongues (or is that 'tails'?) wagging.

Some 700 Alberta vets got involved last year, collecting well over 4,000 litres of waste veterinary medicines, mostly in rural locations. Like the pharmacists, the veterinarians got generous assistance from their major suppliers.

"We've received valuable support from

P.V.U. Sanofi and Coopers," says AVMA Communications Officer Harry Dornn, "and major help from Delibrex. Delibrex covered a major part of last year's program cost by shipping out collection containers and storing returned goods until pick-up. These are environmentally-conscious companies whose efforts deserve acknowledgement."

The Great Drug Round Up standing committee met last fall to plan strategy for May's month-long event. Each of the co-participants then set up their own organizational committees and established a standing liaison to maintain coordination with the main body.

Linked by telephone, by fax, and by the occasional personal contact; they'll be out there from May 1st, sweeping the province for potential killers and environmental polluters with a determination that makes Clint Eastwood look like the tooth fairy. If there are any bad guys lurking in your bathroom cabinet, we suggest you turn them in.

## Yellow Fish Program Is Going Swimmingly



*Fishy goings-on in Calgary. More than 400 members of the Pioneer Division of the Girl Guides took part in the 1991 Yellow Fish Road project.*

Trout Unlimited's latest environmental program is rapidly going down the drain but nobody seems to care. Since the organization introduced its Storm Drain

Marking Program in 1991, its success in promoting the safe disposal of household hazardous materials has won enthusiastic response from communities across the province.

The program enlists the help of youth volunteers in marking all community storm drains with a foot-long yellow fish, a symbol intended to make people aware of the dangers of releasing toxins into the drainage system.

Unlike the sanitary sewer system, the storm sewer system does not flow to a water treatment plant. It flows directly to the river and straight to the home of fish and other aquatic life.

Trout Unlimited Canada's "Yellow Fish Road" program was successfully implemented in 1992 in Calgary, Rocky Mountain House, Brooks, Banff, Okotoks, High River and Airdrie. In 1993, look for those yellow fish to be appearing in Edmonton, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Pincher Creek, Canmore, Cochrane and Leduc.



*After marking a community's storm drain, each house receives information on the program, in the shape of a "yellow fish".*

# Educating Ourselves About Waste

One of the common misconceptions about the Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre is that it is some kind of dumping ground for toxic wastes – an isolated landfill where we can hide our guilty chemical secrets, tucked away out of sight and out of mind.

And this idea persists, despite the fact that the Treatment Centre continues to attract visiting waste management specialists from around the world, all of them voicing approval, and all determined to create something similar in their home countries.

In reality, of course, the Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre is as far removed from the common notion of a dump or landfill as it is possible to go. It is a

highly-sophisticated laboratory and plant dedicated to the special treatment of potentially dangerous wastes from a variety of sources.

What the Centre does is reprocess materials to make them safe for assimilation into the environment. Because of the variety of products received – from oil sludges to household chemicals – this necessitates the use of various treatment methods.

## TWO MAIN TYPES

Wastes fall into two broad categories: organics and inorganics. Organic liquids and solids are hydrocarbon-based. They include waste oils, solvents, paints, pesticides and PCBs. The most successful

treatment for these wastes is high-temperature incineration.

The Centre uses two rocking kilns to destroy organic liquids and certain organic solids, and a rotary kiln to treat sludges and solids. The hazardous materials are incinerated in a high-temperature, oxygen-rich environment and the combustion by-products are “scrubbed” by a sophisticated filter system to remove minute particles and acidic gases before anything is discharged into the atmosphere.

Inorganic liquids and solids are not hydrocarbon-based. These wastes include acids, alkalies, heavy metals and cyanides. Inorganic wastes are treated by various physical or chemical methods.

## Calgary's Old Fridge Round Up Re-Uses and Recycles

### THE FRIDGE RECYCLING PROCESS

FRIDGE PICKED UP BY MONARCH MESSENGER SERVICES AND BROUGHT TO THEIR WAREHOUSE IN CALGARY

Sent to Dupont Canada. Re-used rather than creating new CFCs.

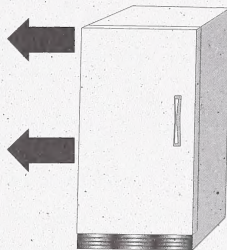


All CFCs removed.  
*Castle Appliance Service*

Sold by *Castle Appliance Service* as spare parts.



Some handles, shelving, and crispers removed.  
*Castle Appliance Service*



Any capacitors removed due to possible PCB content.  
*Castle Appliance Service*



Sent to *Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre* to be destroyed.

Any polyurethane foam insulation removed due to high CFC content.  
*Monarch Messenger Services*



Sent to *Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre* to be destroyed.

Remainder sent to *Navajo Metals*. Shredded into fist size pieces.

• Ferrous Metals (containing iron) re-used by steel mills.

• Non-Ferrous Metals (copper, chrome and aluminum) re-used by various manufacturers.

• Other (plastics, fiberglass, rubber) used as landfill covering and road surfacing for landfill trucks.

The latest in a series of Power Smart initiatives from the City of Calgary Electric System and TransAlta Utilities is a no-charge collection of old refrigerators and freezers. It seems there are thousands of underutilized second fridges humming away in Alberta – equipment that is not only a drain on power and the homeowner's pocket book – but which can also be an environmental burden.

To save much of that wasted power, the utilities are offering to pick up unwanted working fridges or freezers at no charge

and recycle them in an environmentally responsible way.

The Old Fridge Round Up collects the appliances, dismantles and recycles all usable materials, and disposes of potentially harmful substances through the Alberta Special Waste Treatment System.

• All CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) are removed and sent to Dupont Canada for re-use.

• Handles, shelving and crispers are recycled as spare parts. Waste metals are shredded for re-use.

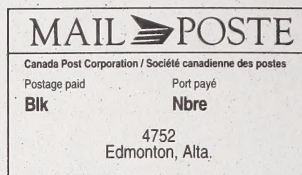
• Plastics, fiberglass and rubber materials are used as landfill coverings and road surfacing for landfill trucks.

• Capacitors (with possible PCB content) and polyurethane foam (with high CFC content) are sent to the Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre.

Older fridges, incidentally, can use two or three times the energy of similarly-sized modern units. That spare fridge in the basement could be wasting energy at a cost of as much as \$100 a year!

Return Postage Guaranteed  
if undeliverable, return to:

**ALBERTA SPECIAL WASTE  
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION**  
610 - 10909 Jasper Ave.  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 3L9



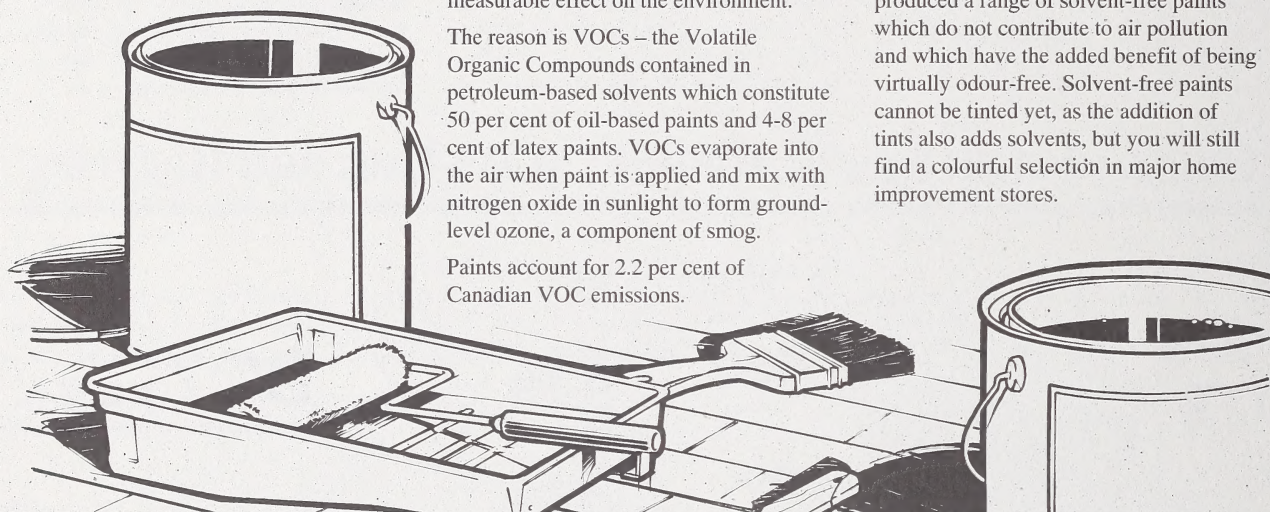
## Alternatives

If you're decorating your home this spring, your choice of paints could have a measurable effect on the environment.

The reason is VOCs – the Volatile Organic Compounds contained in petroleum-based solvents which constitute 50 per cent of oil-based paints and 4-8 per cent of latex paints. VOCs evaporate into the air when paint is applied and mix with nitrogen oxide in sunlight to form ground-level ozone, a component of smog.

Paints account for 2.2 per cent of Canadian VOC emissions.

Now, however, there is an alternative. New technology (from ICI and others) has produced a range of solvent-free paints which do not contribute to air pollution and which have the added benefit of being virtually odour-free. Solvent-free paints cannot be tinted yet, as the addition of tints also adds solvents, but you will still find a colourful selection in major home improvement stores.



## CALL DIRECT:

▲ For information on:

- Hazardous Waste Management Programs in Alberta
- Toxic Round Ups
- Community Study Groups
- Used Oil Programs
- Waste Minimization

**ALBERTA SPECIAL  
WASTE MANAGEMENT  
CORPORATION**  
1-800-272-8873  
422-5029 (Edmonton)  
428-9627 (Fax)

▲ For information on the transportation of dangerous goods:

**ALBERTA PUBLIC  
SAFETY SERVICES**  
1-800-272-9600  
(24 Hours)

▲ For a directory of waste management companies in Alberta:

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
SERVICES ASSOCIATION  
OF ALBERTA**  
439-6363 (Edmonton)  
HOTLINE  
(for small businesses)  
1-800-661-WASTE (9278)

▲ For information on:

- Recycling: Newspaper, Metals, Plastics, Clothing

**RECYCLING BRANCH,  
ALBERTA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION**  
427-5838 (Edmonton)  
297-5925 (Calgary)

▲ To report an environmental emergency or to register a complaint:

**POLLUTION CONTROL  
DIVISION, ALBERTA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION**  
1-800-222-6514

▲ To access the clearing house that puts potential users of waste materials in contact with waste producers:

**ALBERTA WASTE  
MATERIALS EXCHANGE**  
450-5408 (Edmonton)

**ALBERTA SPECIAL  
WASTE MANAGEMENT  
CORPORATION**  
610 - 10909 Jasper Ave.  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 3L9



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*Making a  
world of difference*